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## Palm Leaves and Platinum

As our Chevy Sonic rental passed the green overhead sign that read “Hollywood, 1 mile”, I opened all four windows, stretched my arms out, and yelled, “We made it to Hollywood! What up, L.A., we’re from Boston!”

The drivers of Priuses, Audis, BMWs, and Porsches stared as Josh and I blasted Bruno Mars through the speakers while taking our exit. I yanked my camera out of my purse and snapped shots of palm trees, tangerine rooftops, and pedestrians in sunglasses walking on the sidewalk.

“Girl, we’re going to be like the famous people. We can get Starbucks with Britney Spears!” Josh said.

“I know and we can get groceries with Seth Rogen!” I said.

I wanted to scope out a famous pop star hiding behind a limousine’s tinted windows, like a pearl hidden inside a clam. I was thinking of Desiree, the movie star protagonist in my novel, and how she would be driving down these streets and breathing in the same summery air.

We parked in Beverly Hills, deciding to go to the shopping complex where Kim Kardashian frequented on her show. The bright sun thawed out our frozen New England skin as we ventured onto the sidewalk of Rodeo Drive.

Along a pathway of seashell shaped bricks, we passed by glittering jewelry that shined like beacons in designer store windows. I stopped in front of Prada and stared in awe at the mannequin with a pink crocodile-belly purse looped over its shoulder. A cracking roar from an engine echoed in the street. I turned around and watched an emerald colored Ferrari speed past me. Josh stood in front of a yellow and onyx painted Bugatti parked in front of a clothing store

called Bijan. A man with waxed eyebrows stood near the front door, holding his cufflinks together, and looking like a bouncer at a club. After feeling like we overstayed our welcome, we drove off Rodeo drive and waved goodbye to the Beverly Hills shield and platinum plated fire hydrants.

Our next spot was Hollywood Boulevard. We parked the car and walked down the street. When I was wiggling my camera out of my purse, Josh grabbed my arm.

“Watch the floor, girl,” he said.

I looked down and saw a plastic container holding a moldy grilled cheese sandwich lying on the sidewalk.

“Hungry?” I asked.

“No, let’s just get to the better parts,” Josh said.

We maneuvered our way around empty bottles, used pot rolling papers, and candy wrappers that lay on the sidewalk. After every few steps, we encountered a homeless person dressed in layers of tattered shirts and ripped jeans. They stood on top of a celebrity’s red star, held up signs asking for help, and said, “God Bless you.”

Walking past the signs was easy but I stopped when I saw a man folding palm leaves and linking the green blades together to form a heart. He smiled at me.

“Custom jewelry made from palms,” he said.

Police started placing barricades on the streets in preparation for the next premiere. I wondered how Desiree would feel about watching cops shuffle the homeless off the streets, as if they were specks of dust on her gown. She would remember days when she was forced to press her face against the cold sidewalk to sleep. She would think of Landon when she would see a street artist sketching with charcoal in one hand and jingling a cup in the other.

I thought watching a live recording of a T.V. show and seeing ritzy shopping centers would give me the inspiration I needed to complete my book. But as I took one last look at the man folding palm leaves into a heart, I realized *this* was The Other Side of Desire.